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(23)

THE CUSTOMERS.

[Cowper, William]

The Diverting History of John Gilpin

Shewing how he went *farther* than he intended and came *safe* home again.

ILLUSTRATED · BY
H · FITZ-COOK ·
AND · ENGRAVED · BY · J · C · WHYMPER

"A Train-band Captain eke was he."

LONDON · LONGMANS · GREEN · AND · Co

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John Gilpin was a citizen
Of credit and renown,
A train-band captain eke was he,
Of famous London town.

John Gilpin's spouse said to her dear,
"Though wedded we have been
These twice ten tedious years, yet we
No holiday have seen.

"To-morrow is our wedding-day,
And we will then repair
Unto the 'Bell,' at Edmonton,
All in a chaise and pair.

My sister and my sister's child,
Myself and children three,
Will fill the chaise, so you must ride
On horseback after we."

He soon replied, "I do admire
Of womankind but one,
And you are she, my dearest dear,
Therefore it shall be done.

"I am a linen-draper bold,
As all the world doth know,
And my good friend the Callender,
Will lend his horse to go."

Quoth Mrs. Gilpin: "That's well said;
And for that wine is dear,
We will be furnished with our own,
Which is both bright and clear."

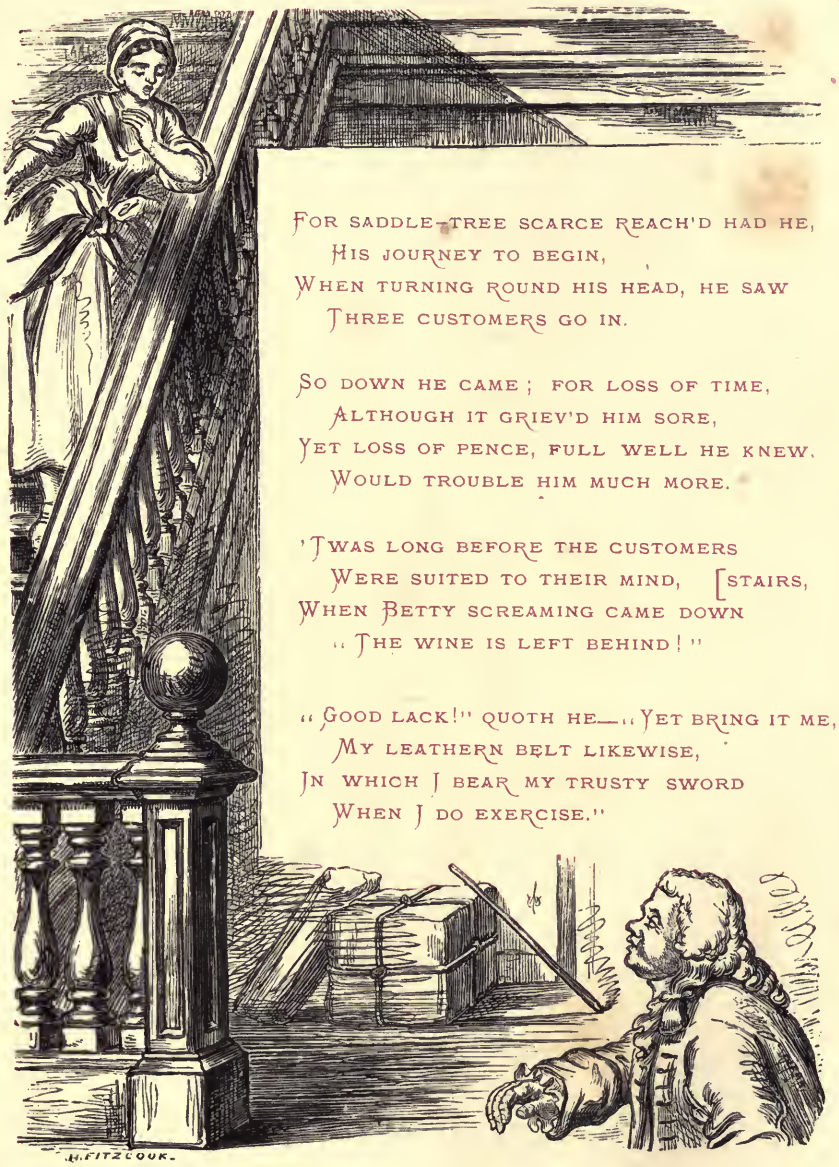
The morning came, the chaise was brought,
But yet was not allow'd
To drive up to the door, lest all
Should say that she was proud.

John Gilpin kissed his loving wife.
O'erjoyed was he to find
That, though on pleasure she was bent,
She had a frugal mind.

So three doors off the chaise was
  Where they did all get in, [stay'd,
Six precious souls, and all agog
  To dash through thick and thin.

Smack went the whip, round went the
  Were never folks so glad, [wheels,
The stones did rattle underneath,
  As if Cheapside were mad.

John Gilpin at his horse's side
  Seiz'd fast the flowing mane,
And up he got in haste to ride,
  But soon got down again.



For saddle-tree scarce reach'd had he,
His journey to begin,
When turning round his head, he saw
Three customers go in.

So down he came; for loss of time,
Although it griev'd him sore,
Yet loss of pence, full well he knew,
Would trouble him much more.

'Twas long before the customers
Were suited to their mind, [stairs,
When Betty screaming came down
"The wine is left behind!"

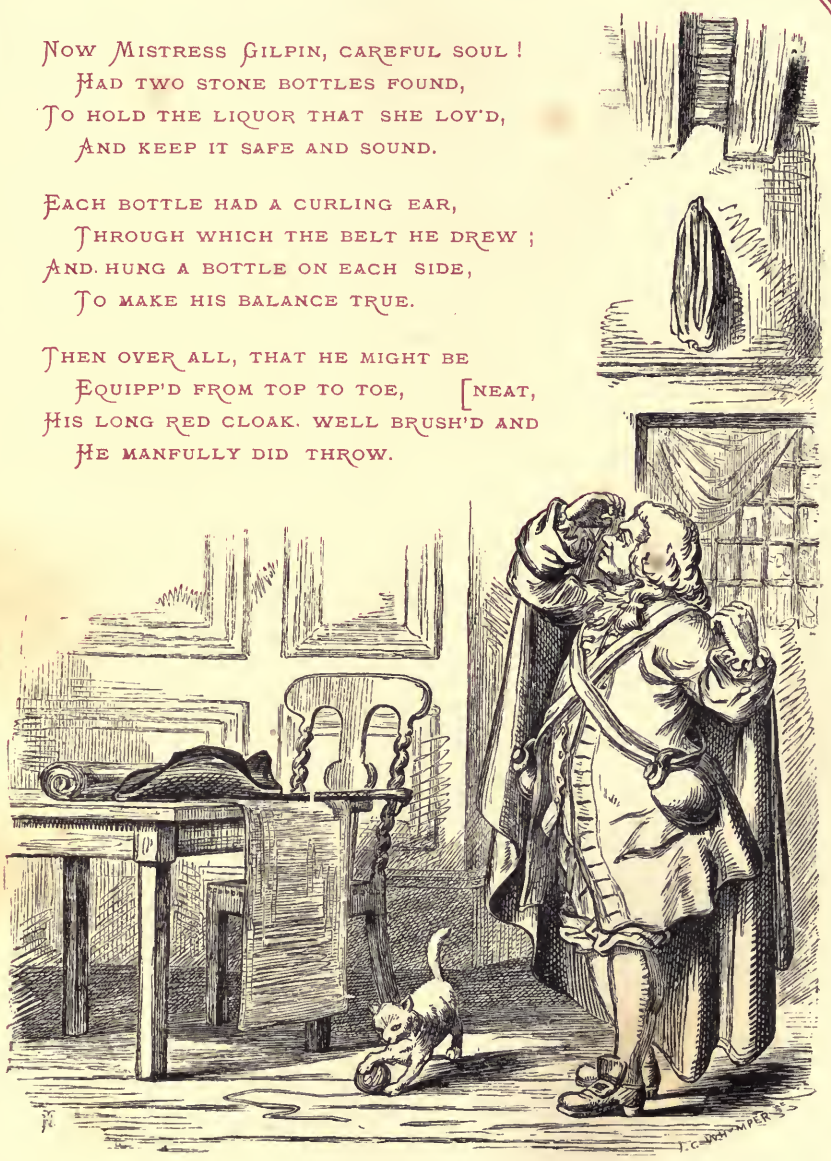
"Good lack!" quoth he—"yet bring it me,
My leathern belt likewise,
In which I bear my trusty sword
When I do exercise."

DEPARTURE OF CHAISE.

Now Mistress Gilpin, careful soul!
Had two stone bottles found,
To hold the liquor that she lov'd,
And keep it safe and sound.

Each bottle had a curling ear,
Through which the belt he drew;
And hung a bottle on each side,
To make his balance true.

Then over all, that he might be
Equipp'd from top to toe,
His long red cloak, well brush'd and neat,
He manfully did throw.



Now see him mounted once again
Upon his nimble steed,
Full slowly pacing o'er the stones
With caution and good heed.

But finding soon a smoother road
Beneath his well-shod feet,
The snorting beast began to trot,
Which gall'd him in his seat.

So, fair and softly, John he cried,
But John he cried in vain,
That trot became a gallop soon,
In spite of curb and rein.

So stooping down, as needs he must
Who cannot sit upright,
He grasp'd the mane with both his hands,
And eke with all his might.

His horse, who never in that sort
Had handled been before,
What thing upon his back had got
Did wonder more and more.

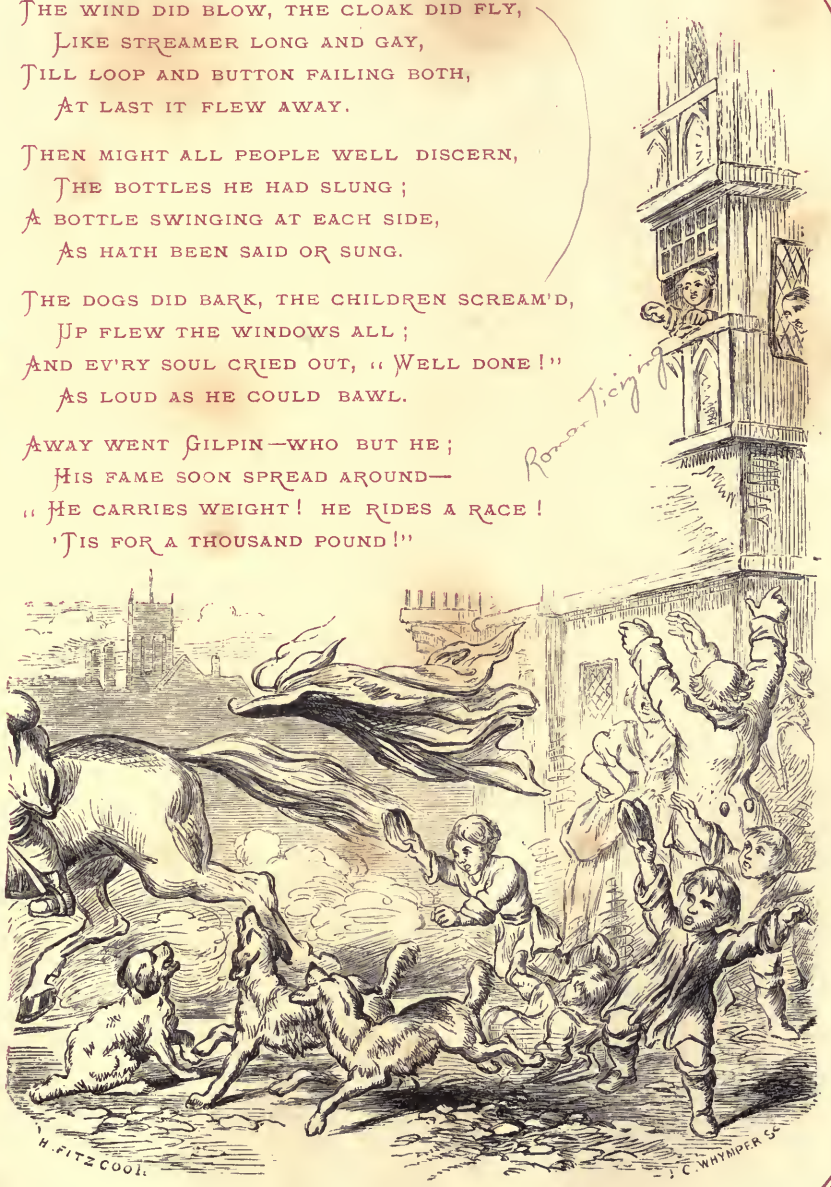
Away went Gilpin, neck or nought,
Away went hat and wig;
He little dreamt, when he set out,
Of running such a rig.

The wind did blow, the cloak did fly,
Like streamer long and gay,
Till loop and button failing both,
At last it flew away.

Then might all people well discern,
The bottles he had slung;
A bottle swinging at each side,
As hath been said or sung.

The dogs did bark, the children scream'd,
Up flew the windows all;
And ev'ry soul cried out, "Well done!"
As loud as he could bawl.

Away went Gilpin—who but he;
His fame soon spread around—
"He carries weight! he rides a race!
'Tis for a thousand pound!"



"AWAY WENT GILPIN!"

And still as fast as he drew near,
'Twas wonderful to view
How in a trice the turnpike-men
Their gates wide open threw.

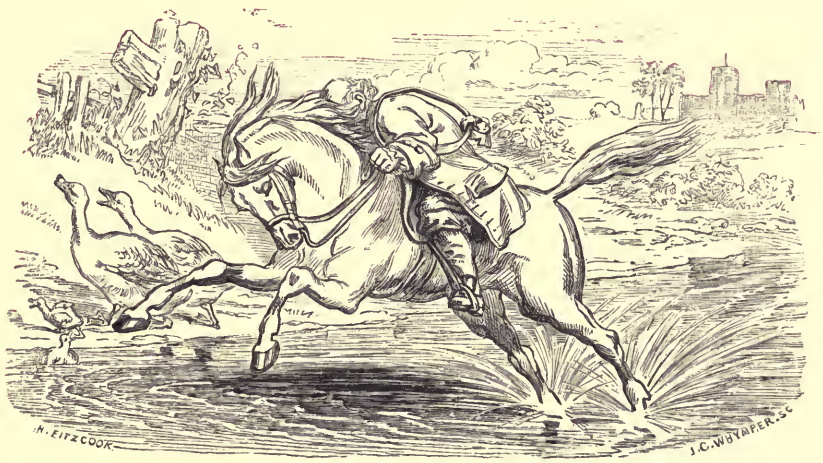
And how as he went bowing down
His reeking head full low,
The bottles twain behind his back
Were shatter'd at a blow.

Down ran the wine into the road,
Most piteous to be seen,
Which made his horse's flanks to smoke
As they had basted been.

But still he seem'd to carry weight,
With leathern girdle brac'd;
For all might see the bottle-necks
Still dangling at his waist.

Thus all through merry Islington
These gambols he did play,
And till he came unto the Wash
Of Edmonton so gay.

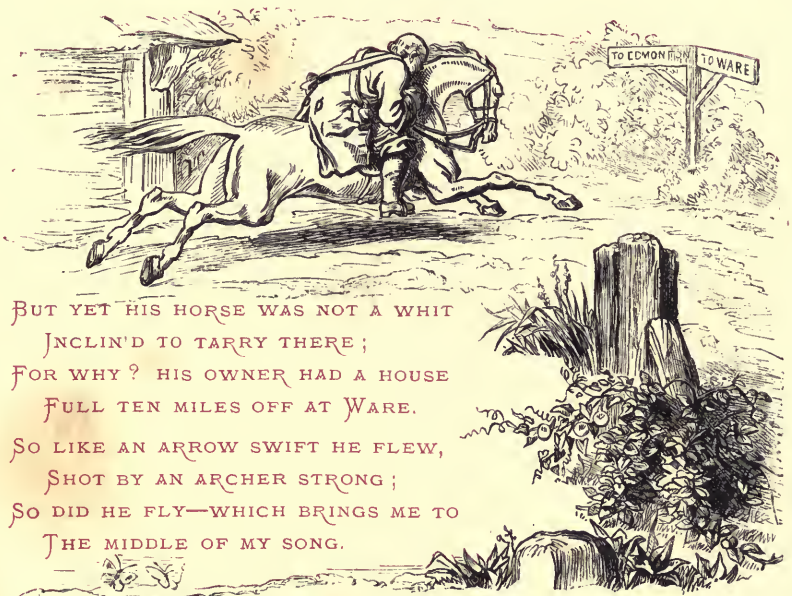
And there he threw the Wash about
On both sides of the way,
Just (like unto a trundling mop,
Or a wild goose at play.)



At Edmonton his loving wife
From the balcony spied
Her tender husband, wond'ring much
To see how he did ride.

"Stop, stop, John Gilpin!—Here's the
They all at once did cry; [house!"
"The dinner waits, and we are tired:"
Said Gilpin—"So am I."

THE "BELL" AT EDMONTON.

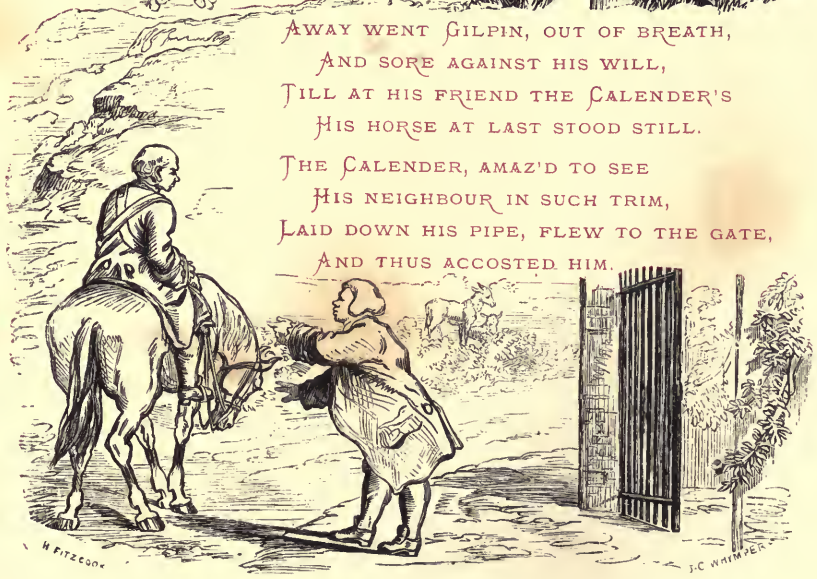


But yet his horse was not a whit
Inclin'd to tarry there;
For why? his owner had a house
Full ten miles off at Ware.

So like an arrow swift he flew,
Shot by an archer strong;
So did he fly—which brings me to
The middle of my song.

Away went Gilpin, out of breath,
And sore against his will,
Till at his friend the Calender's
His horse at last stood still.

The Calender, amaz'd to see
His neighbour in such trim,
Laid down his pipe, flew to the gate,
And thus accosted him.



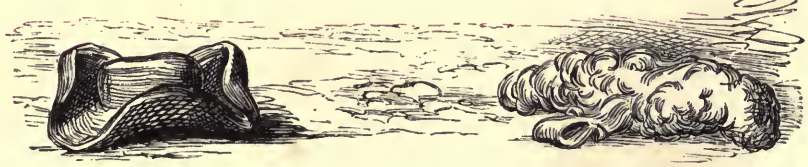
"What news! what news! your tidings tell,
Tell me you must and shall—
Say why bare-headed you are come,
Or why you come at all?"

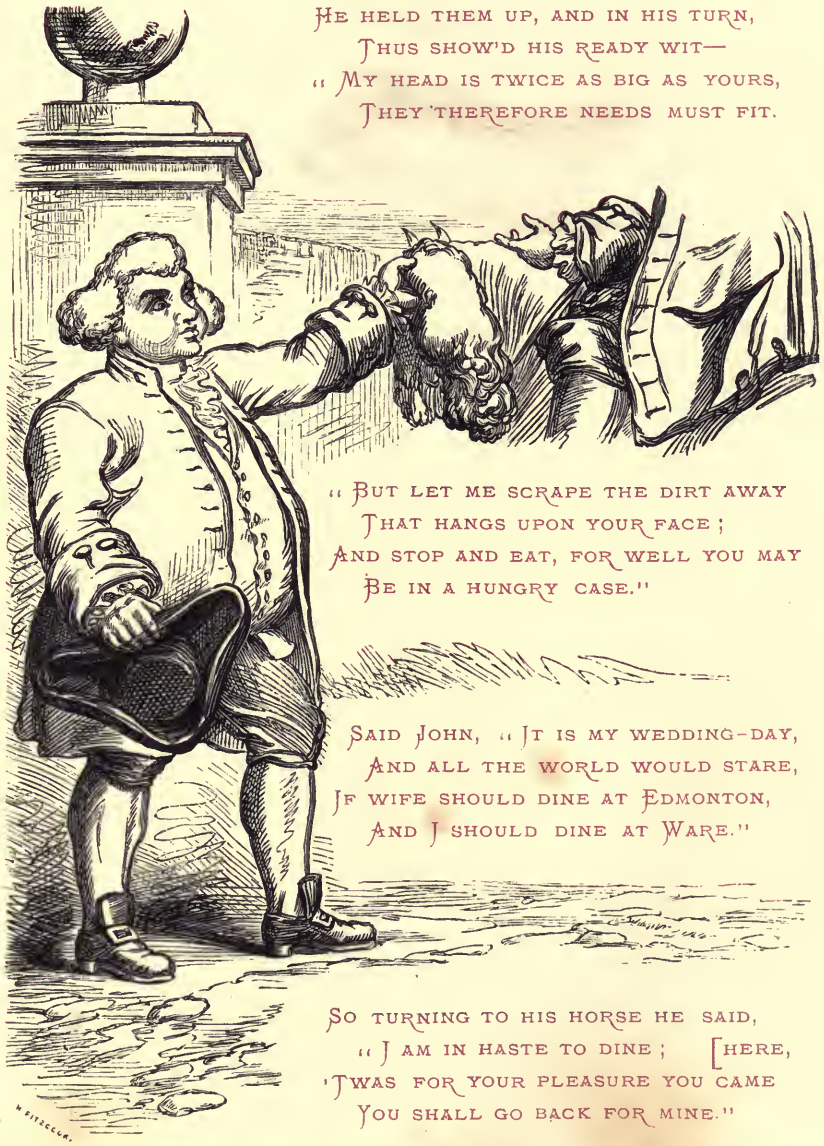
Now Gilpin had a pleasant wit,
And lov'd a timely joke;
And thus unto the Calender
In merry guise he spoke;

"I came because your horse would come;
And, if I well forbode,
My hat and wig will soon be here,
They are upon the road."

The Calender, right glad to find
His friend in merry pin,
Return'd him not a single word.
But to the house went in;

Whence straight he came with hat and wig,
A wig that flow'd behind,
A hat not much the worse for wear,
Each comely in its kind.





He held them up, and in his turn,
Thus show'd his ready wit—
"My head is twice as big as yours,
They therefore needs must fit.

"But let me scrape the dirt away
That hangs upon your face;
And stop and eat, for well you may
Be in a hungry case."

Said John, "It is my wedding-day,
And all the world would stare,
If wife should dine at Edmonton,
And I should dine at Ware."

So turning to his horse he said,
"I am in haste to dine; [here,
'Twas for your pleasure you came
You shall go back for mine."

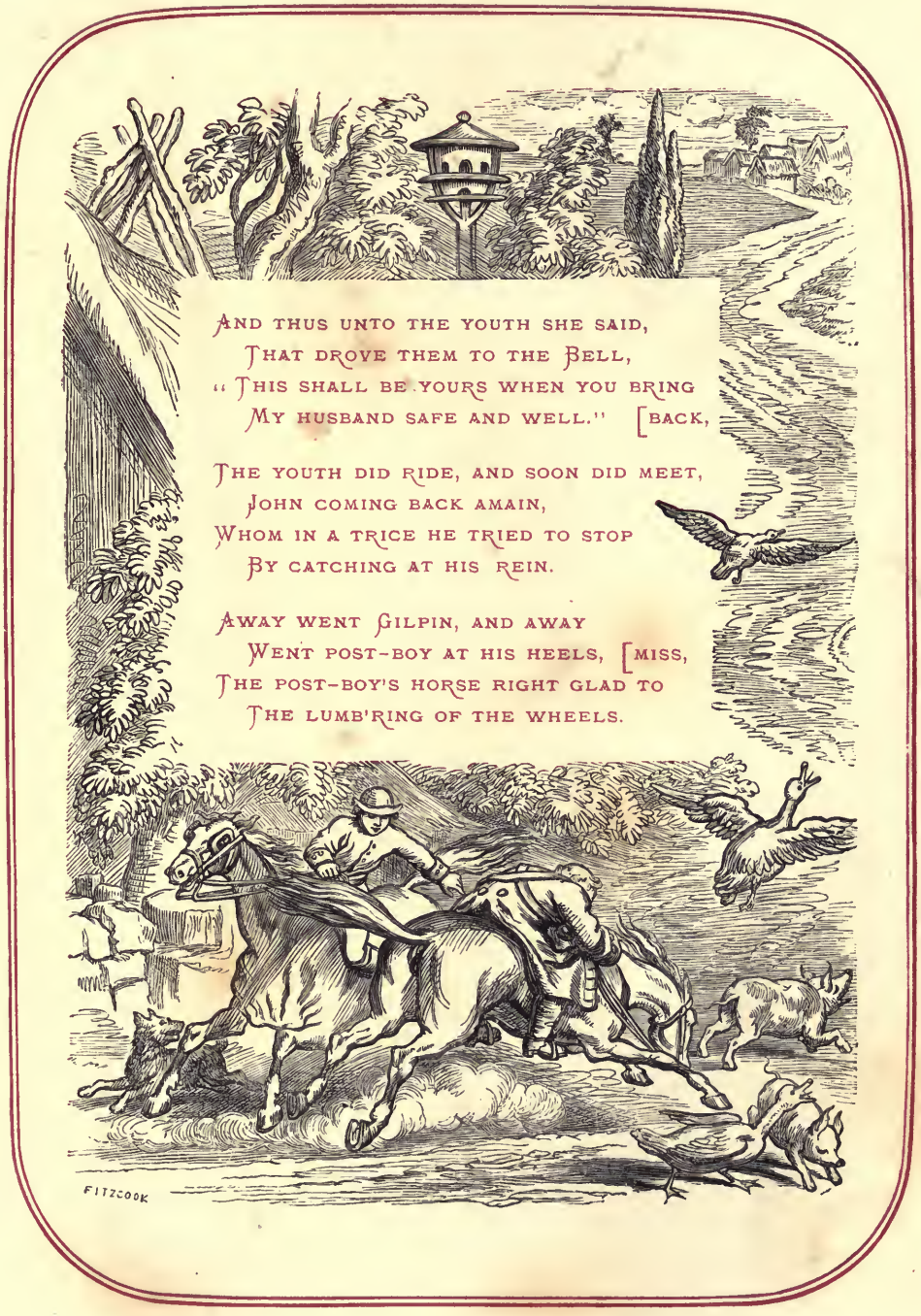
JOHN GILPIN'S BOAST.

Ah luckless speech and bootless boast:
For which he paid full dear;
For while he spake, a braying ass,
Did sing most loud and clear.

Whereat his horse did snort as he
Had heard a lion roar,
And gallop'd off with all his might,
As he had done before.

Away went Gilpin, and away
Went Gilpin's hat and wig;
He lost them sooner than at first,—
For why? they were too big.

Now, Mistress Gilpin, when she saw
Her husband posting down
Into the country far away,
She pulled out half-a-crown.



And thus unto the youth she said,
That drove them to the Bell,
"This shall be yours when you bring
My husband safe and well." [back,

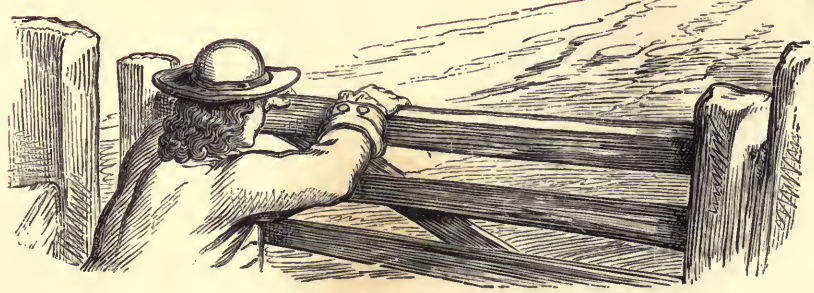
The youth did ride, and soon did meet,
John coming back amain,
Whom in a trice he tried to stop
By catching at his rein.

Away went Gilpin, and away
Went post-boy at his heels, [miss,
The post-boy's horse right glad to
The lumb'ring of the wheels.

But not performing what he meant,
And gladly would have done,
The frighted steed he frighted more,
And made him faster run.

Six gentlemen upon the road,
Thus seeing Gilpin fly,
With post-boy scamp'ring in the rear,
They raised a hue and cry.

"Stop thief! stop thief!—a highwayman!"
Not one of them was mute;
And all and each that passed that way
Did join in the pursuit.



And now the turnpike gates again
Flew open in short space,
The toll-men thinking, as before,
That Gilpin rode a race.

And so he did, and won it too,
For he got first to town,
Nor stopp'd till where he had got up,
He did again get down.

Now let us sing, Long live the King,
And Gilpin, Long live he:
And when he next doth ride abroad
May I be there to see!

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[Cowper, William]
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